

Appl. No. 09/450,023  
Reply to Office Action of January 10, 2008  
Amdt. Dated March 11, 2008

**THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Previously Presented) A method for facilitating a buyer's selection of a vendor via automated comparison of records and bidding by vendors of customized goods or services via a computer operated system, comprising steps of:

    prior to receiving job data from a buyer pertaining to a job for which the buyer seeks a vendor, receiving electronic communications from a plurality of vendors, the electronic communications being used in establishing a plurality of vendor records which are stored in an electronic memory associated with the computer system, the vendor records corresponding to each of a plurality of vendors and having vendor capability data identifying a plurality of capabilities for said vendor to provide a customized good or service;

    each buyer using the system generating an electronic communication providing information identifying a plurality of vendors for inclusion in a pool of vendors associated with said buyer to potentially receive a job solicitation, wherein the system stores electronic data sufficient to identify every vendor pool and its association with a corresponding buyer based upon the buyer transmitted vendor pool identification information which occurs prior to analysis of job data pertaining to a job for which bids are sought by or on behalf of the buyer;

    receiving an electronic communication defining a job data from or on behalf of at least one buyer, after said buyer's vendor pool is determined, said job data including a job

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descriptor data which specifies a plurality of characteristics of said customized good or service for which said buyer wishes a bid;

automatically comparing via a computer processor said vendor records to said job data, wherein said comparing includes comparing said plurality of characteristics for said customized good or service with corresponding plural capabilities for vendors from the pool of vendors associated with said buyer;

automatically identifying via a computer processor at least one subset from the buyer's associated pool of vendors as qualified for receiving the solicitation, based on said comparison;

thereafter transmitting the solicitation to only selected members from the identified subset of the buyer's associated pool of vendors;

receiving bid response data from at least one of said vendors which received said solicitation, said bid response data identifying each of the vendors from which it was received and a bid price; and

outputting to said buyer an electronic communication providing at least one of said bid response data.

Claims 2.-26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein said job data further includes a selection criteria data, said selection criteria specifying at least one of a vendor name, its relevant geographic location, a vendor capability as to product categories,

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a descriptor of an ownership characteristic for said vendor, a descriptor of a union status of said vendor, and

wherein said comparison is performed in accordance with said selection criteria data.

28. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 further comprising steps of:

ranking said bid response data according to said represented bid price.

29. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 further comprising steps of:

ranking said bid response data according to price; and  
publishing ranked bid response data.

30. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 further comprising steps of:

ranking said bid response data according to price; and  
publishing information to other vendors identifying a selected vendor and a rank order value of said bid response data.

31. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein said vendor capability data represents a vendor's capability to manufacture each of a plurality of different types of customized goods.

32. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, further comprising steps of:

transmitting to said buyer an invoice for payment of said bid subsequent to receiving a job completion data.

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33. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, further comprising steps of:

transferring a payment from said buyer into an escrow account serving as a single-source accounts payable destination for the buyer's vendor payments;

transferring a payment from said escrow account to an account of said vendor corresponding to the invoice payment data.

34. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, further comprising steps of:

adding a system use fee to the invoice.

35. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein a vendor status in the buyer associated vendor pool is not altered as a result of its bid values or failure to bid.

36. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein an award is made only to a lowest bidder.

37. (Previously Presented) A method for facilitating a buyer's selection of a vendor via automated comparison of records and bidding by vendors of customized goods or services via a computer operated system, comprising steps of:

prior to receiving job data from a buyer pertaining to a job for which the buyer seeks a vendor, receiving electronic communications from a plurality of vendors, the electronic communications being used in automatically establishing a plurality of vendor records which are stored in an electronic memory associated with the computer system, the vendor records

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corresponding to each of a plurality of vendors and having vendor capability data identifying a plurality of capabilities for said vendor to provide a customized good or service;

each buyer using the system generating an electronic communication providing information identifying a plurality of vendors for inclusion in a pool of vendors associated with said buyer to potentially receive a job solicitation, wherein the system stores electronic data sufficient to identify every vendor pool and its association with a corresponding buyer based upon the buyer transmitted vendor pool identification information which occurs prior to analysis of job data pertaining to a job for which bids are sought by or on behalf of the buyer;

receiving an electronic communication defining a job data from or on behalf of at least one buyer, after said buyer's vendor pool is determined, said job data including a job descriptor data which specifies a plurality of characteristics of said customized good or service for which said buyer wishes a bid;

automatically comparing via a computer processor said vendor records to said job data, wherein said comparing includes comparing said plurality of characteristics for said customized good or service with corresponding plural capabilities for vendors from the pool of vendors associated with said buyer;

automatically identifying via a computer processor at least one subset from the buyer's associated pool of vendors as qualified for receiving the solicitation, based on said comparison;

thereafter automatically transmitting the solicitation to only selected members from the identified subset of the buyer's associated pool of vendors;

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receiving bid response data from at least one of said vendors which received said solicitation, said bid response data identifying each of the vendors from which it was received and a bid price; and

thereafter automatically outputting to said buyer an electronic communication providing at least one of said bid response data.

38. (Previously Presented) A system for facilitating a buyer's selection of a vendor via automated comparison of records and based upon bidding by vendors of customized goods or services via a computer operated system, comprising:

a means for receiving electronic communications from a plurality of vendors prior to receiving job data from a buyer pertaining to a job for which the buyer seeks a vendor, the electronic communications being used in establishing a plurality of vendor records which are stored in an electronic memory associated with the computer system, the vendor records corresponding to each of a plurality of vendors and having vendor capability data identifying a plurality of capabilities for said vendor to provide a customized good or service;

a means for receiving an electronic communication from any buyer using the system providing information identifying a plurality of vendors for inclusion in a pool of vendors associated with said buyer to potentially receive a job solicitation, wherein the system stores electronic data sufficient to identify every vendor pool and its association with a corresponding buyer based upon the buyer transmitted vendor pool identification information

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which occurs prior to analysis of job data pertaining to a job for which bids are sought by or on behalf of the buyer;

a means for receiving an electronic communication defining a job data from or on behalf of at least one buyer, after said buyer's vendor pool is determined, said job data including a job descriptor data which specifies a plurality of characteristics of said customized good or service for which said buyer wishes a bid;

a means for automatically comparing via a computer processor said vendor records to said job data, wherein said comparing includes comparing said plurality of characteristics for said customized good or service with corresponding plural capabilities for vendors from the pool of vendors associated with said buyer;

a means for automatically identifying via a computer processor at least one subset from the buyer's associated pool of vendors as qualified for receiving the solicitation, based on said comparison;

a means for transmitting the solicitation to only selected members from the identified subset of the buyer's associated pool of vendors;

a means for receiving bid response data from at least one of said vendors which received said solicitation, said bid response data identifying each of the vendors from which it was received and a bid price; and

a means for outputting to said buyer an electronic communication providing at least one of said bid response data.

39. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 38, wherein said job data further includes a selection criteria data, said selection criteria specifying at least one of

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a vendor name, its relevant geographic location, a vendor capability as to product categories, a descriptor of an ownership characteristic for said vendor, a descriptor of a union status of said vendor, and

wherein said comparison is performed in accordance with said selection criteria data.

40. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 38 further comprising a means for

ranking said bid response data according to said represented bid price.

41. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 38 further comprising a means for

ranking said bid response data according to price and publishing ranked bid response data.

42. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 38 further comprising a means for

ranking said bid response data according to price and publishing information to other vendors identifying a selected vendor and a rank order value of said bid response data.

43. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 38, wherein said vendor capability data represents a vendor's capability to manufacture each of a plurality of different types of customized goods.

44. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 38, further comprising a means for

transmitting to said buyer an invoice for payment of said bid subsequent to receiving a job completion data.

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45. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 44, further comprising

a means for transferring a payment from said buyer into an escrow account serving as a single-source accounts payable destination for the buyer's vendor payments; and

a means for transferring a payment from said escrow account to an account of said vendor corresponding to the invoice payment data.

46. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 44, further comprising a means for

adding a system use fee to the invoice.

47. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 38, wherein a vendor status in the buyer associated vendor pool is not altered as a result of its bid values or failure to bid.

48. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 38, wherein an award is made only to a lowest bidder.

49. (Previously Presented) A system for facilitating a buyer's selection of a vendor via automated comparison of records and based upon bidding by vendors of customized goods or services via a computer operated system, comprising:

a means for receiving electronic communications from a plurality of vendors prior to receiving job data from a buyer pertaining to a job for which the buyer seeks a vendor, the electronic communications being used in automatically establishing a plurality of vendor

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records which are stored in an electronic memory associated with the computer system, the vendor records corresponding to each of a plurality of vendors and having vendor capability data identifying a plurality of capabilities for said vendor to provide a customized good or service;

a means for receiving an electronic communication from any buyer using the system providing information identifying a plurality of vendors for inclusion in a pool of vendors associated with said buyer to potentially receive a job solicitation, wherein the system stores electronic data sufficient to identify every vendor pool and its association with a corresponding buyer based upon the buyer transmitted vendor pool identification information which occurs prior to analysis of job data pertaining to a job for which bids are sought by or on behalf of the buyer;

a means for receiving an electronic communication defining a job data from or on behalf of at least one buyer, after said buyer's vendor pool is determined, said job data including a job descriptor data which specifies a plurality of characteristics of said customized good or service for which said buyer wishes a bid;

a means for automatically comparing via a computer processor said vendor records to said job data, wherein said comparing includes comparing said plurality of characteristics for said customized good or service with corresponding plural capabilities for vendors from the pool of vendors associated with said buyer;

a means for automatically identifying via a computer processor at least one subset from the buyer's associated pool of vendors as qualified for receiving the solicitation, based on said comparison;

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a means for automatically transmitting the solicitation to only selected members from the identified subset of the buyer's associated pool of vendors; and

a means for receiving bid response data from at least one of said vendors which received said solicitation, said bid response data identifying each of the vendors from which it was received and a bid price.